

SPECIAL TRIBUTE ISSUE TO WICHITA'S TELEVISION HOST TOM LEAHY, JR.

# THE BASEMENT SUBLET OF HORROR MAGAZINE

BASEMENT  
SUBLET  
ISSUE

#3

OCTOBER  
2015



THE HOST  
TOM LEAHY JR.



GREEN HELL  
FROM THE VOID

ALSO:

- "TOM LEAHY - MAN OF NIGHTMARES"  
BY ROGER HILL
- ARTICLES BY RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN &  
SCOTT PHILLIPS
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# THE BASEMENT SUBLET

# OF HORROR

MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2015, ISSUE #3

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# TOM LEAHY-MAN OF NIGHTMARES

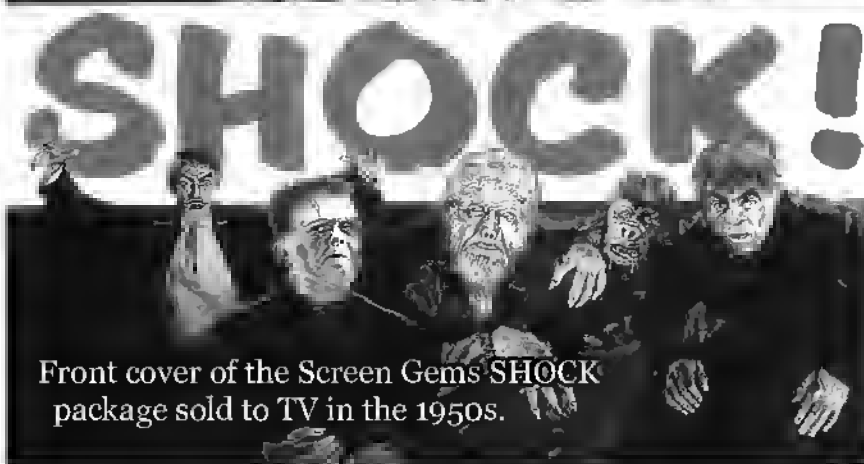
by Roger Hill

Was I exposed first to Famous Monsters of Film/land magazine or the Nightmare program on KAKE-TV? That's a question I've been asking myself for the past 50 years. My memory is a little foggy at this point, but my best guess is that it was Nightmare first. The year was 1958 and I was a timid ten year-old who up to that point had only been exposed to early morning TV shows of Captain Kangaroo or the after-school shows of The Mickey Mouse Club. Night-time television was filled with mostly westerns and cop shows and I did enjoy those immensely during those early childhood years.



Roger Hill with Tom Leahy Jr. during a commercial shoot for a Wichita Haunted House that took place in 2007. This was the last public appearance of Tom as The Host.

During the 1950s, horror movies were enjoying a resurgence of interest. Science fiction films were beginning to show exceptional profits at the box office too. Among horror programs created in the past for the TV networks, there had been only one regular series devoted to the supernatural -- "Lights Out" -- which was finally killed off by the competition from "I Love Lucy". Television was still in its infancy and by the spring of 1957, Screen Gems Inc., a producer of family shows like "Father Knows Best", "Ford Theatre" and "Rin Tin Tin", had concluded a major deal which ultimately would affect millions of TV viewers all across the U.S..



Front cover of the Screen Gems SHOCK package sold to TV in the 1950s.

For 20million dollars they had purchased the rights to 600 old Universal-International feature pictures for TV syndication. Out of these 600 films, which included comedies and social documentaries, Screen Gems culled a pre-Halloween Shock Theatre package of 52 horror films and offered them to local stations to show as they pleased beginning in October, 1957. Within three weeks, they were billing over 40 TV stations \$3 million dollars and were confident of doubling that figure by the following month.

The public ate it up. They were ready for it and ratings soared to new heights. In New York, one showing of Dracula lifted WABC-TV from a rated sixth place

to first in the market. Seventh rated KTLA-TV, Los Angeles, leaped to second place with Frankenstein. TV Guide reported that all of this success was sort of surprising when one remembers that both of these Universal melodramas, Dracula and Frankenstein, dated back to 1931 and 1932 respectively. As novels, they were even older, dating back to the 1800s. Outdated? Not by a long shot. Obviously TV Guide was not aware of the fact that both of these undisputed champions of horror had been successfully re-

released as many as four times since their initial debut in the early 1930s, and as recent as 1951. Their nostalgic popularity with the adult audience was already well established, plus, the post World War II baby boomers were reaching that prime age for exposure.

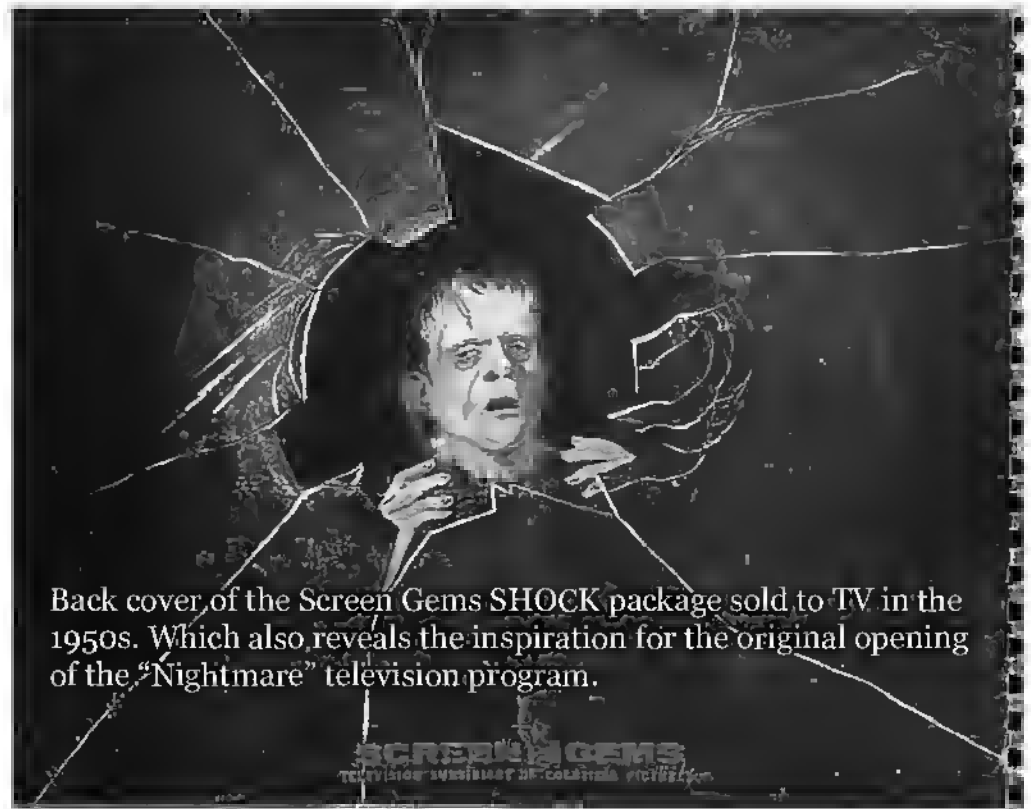
Across the U.S., local TV stations kicked off their promotional campaign stunts for the coming previews of television terror. Frankenstein monsters multiplied like amoebas, and stalked the streets of scores of American towns. For several days a horse-drawn hearse creaked sadly through Manhattan traffic with "Vampira" and yet another Frankenstein's monster aboard.

In Philadelphia a "ghoul girl" and monster duo startled the local populace. In Hollywood a model clad in a pajama top with 18 inches of auburn hair standing on end managed her way into newspaper offices and TV page reviewers to present editors with a "do-it-yourself nightmare kit." The advent of the monster movies was front-page news in several U.S. cities.

As the Shock Theatre packages kicked off around the country, stations set about digging up their own weird personalities to give the films that nice extra touch of spine tingling horror. These creeps, or more politely, hosts, created their own crazy, spooktacular styles of introducing and setting the mood for the weekly horror presentation. Some were better than others and believe it or not, some attracted more of a following than the films themselves.

In 1955, even before the horror host marathon began snowballing, KABC-TV in Los Angeles had introduced an eerie female movie hostess by the name of Vampira; real name Maila Nurmi. Her show captured a high percentage of the ratings in the West. The East coast had their hero of horror too, in particular, a fellow named Roland. Played by actor, John Zacherle, Roland had begun at WCAU-TV in Philadelphia, but became so popular that he eventually was hired away by WABC-TV in New York City where he decided to change his name from Roland to Zacherly and went on to enjoy even greater fame.

Here in the midwest, things were beginning to happen. Horror hosts were starting to pop up everywhere as the monster craze kicked into high gear. Tom Leahy didn't know it yet, but he was about to become one of the most popular horror hosts in the four state area of Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Colorado. John Froome, KAKE-TV's chief announcer came to Tom with the idea of starting a new late night horror host movie program on Channel 10. Tom was offered and accepted the hosting job for the new program which was to be called "NIGHTMARE"!



Maila Nurmi appearing as the early horror host Vampira.

Froome indicated that Lee Parsons, a cameraman at KAKE, was also interested in working on the show. So Tom began developing the concept for presenting the dual horror act of "The Host" and "Rodney." This included creating much of the sets and props which helped to create the interior of a dungeon in a haunted bouse. This was no problem for Tom who had artistic abilities and talent. He also wrote all of the scripts for the new Nightmare show, applied the make-up to Parsons and himself and the show premiered on January 31, 1958, with a showing of "THE MUMMY". The scripts were exceptional. Writing came easy for Tom who had previously written and sold stories to some of the science fiction digest magazines in the mid 1950s. His writing displayed a natural talent for droll humor and philosophical witticisms which, as "The Host," he would deliver with a sometimes fluent English accent. He utilized a special vocabulary all his own, which was made up of long words that really didn't make much sense at all, yet sometimes sounded as if they did. It was funny. It worked!

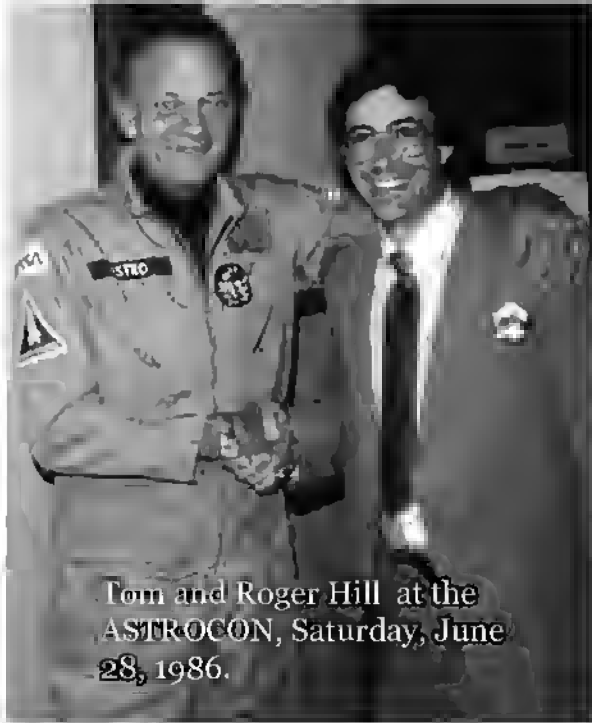
Every Friday night, Leahy became the ebullient eccentric Host, who, along with Rodney, his mute sidekick, would introduce the horror feature and be off and running for a night of buffoonery and outrageous escapades. The show was a success almost overnight as the ratings sheets proved and sponsors quickly bought up the commercial air time. Some of the earliest shows featured crude commercials with The Host just holding a book and flipping through page after page of sponsor's names, reading them slowly and aloud. The horror fans were primed and ready for "Nightmare" and they responded immediately of their approval with hundreds of cards and letters to KAKE-TV. The Host and Rodney became so popular that they even made personal appearances at local theatres one Halloween night.

By 1960, Tom had left Channel 10 to become Promotion Director at KTVH, Channel 12. Lee Parsons departed for work in Las Vegas and Tom continued the character of "The Host" introducing the late night horror flicks at KTVH. By 1962, he had relocated to KARD-TV where he had begun the "MAJOR ASTRO SHOW". Bill Sikes, the original director of the "Nightmare" shows at KAKE was also working at KARD. Sikes had always enjoyed doing the "Nightmare" program and in 1969 he and Tom decided to bring the show back on the air. Jim Herring, a young cameraman at KARD had become good friends with Tom while doing camera work on the Major Astro show. Herring remembered how much he had enjoyed the old Nightmare shows on TV when he was younger and having aspirations of breaking into the acting business, approached Tom about playing the part of Rodney. Tom accepted and Nightmare returned from the dead, now in full color for the first time, on Friday night, July 25, 1969.

To celebrate the show's return to the air waves, Tom wrote a special two-part segment, which today many local "Nightmare" buffs consider to be a genuine classic! "Trip To The Moon" was the title of that first show and once again the bungling buffoons of horror proved that they could easily screw-up anything they touched, in the true spirit of Laurel and Hardy. This trip to the moon was indeed hilarious, as many viewers will remember. The payoff comes in the final moments of the skit with the Host and Rodney crash-landing their spaceship into a living room and mistaking their mirrored reflection for moon men aliens and then trying to communicate with them. In later skits they poked fun at politics by having Rodney run for Secretary of Fertilizer. They spoofed Hollywood and its monsters by creating their own monster, which turned out to be a hamburger and french-fries.



The show did well and continued for over two years. The fans loved it and the Nelson ratings were solid, but by August of 1971, the end was near. Jim Herring, who had brought the characterization of Rodney to new heights of popularity decided it was time to expand his horizons. He was ready to make a break from Wichita and took a vacation from KARD to explore job opportunities in California; a decision he would not regret. Jim moved his family to Granada Hills, California, in late September of 1971, where he began doing freelance camera work. Eventually he broke into doing television commercials and syndicated shows and in April of 1973, landed a full-time position as cameraman for various sports and entertainment shows on NBC.

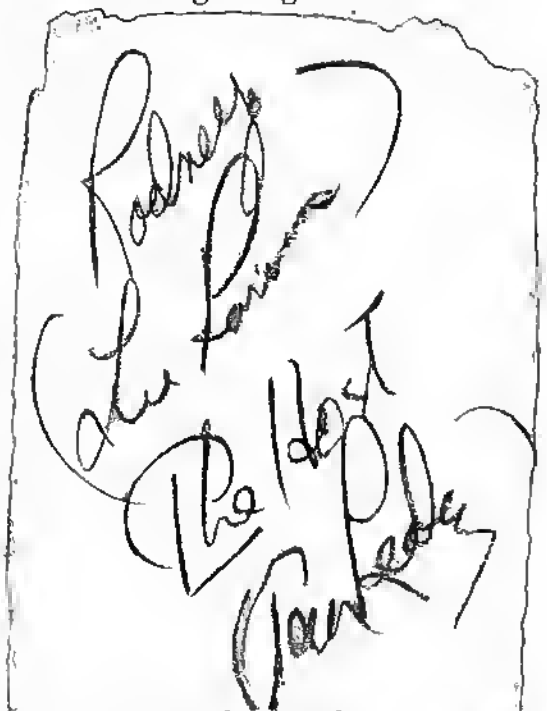


Tom and Roger Hill at the ASTROCON, Saturday, June 28, 1986.

Tom Leahy was still busy with the Major Astro Show five days a week but shortly thereafter signed a two year contract with KARD-TV which altered Tom's working arrangements. He came in only once a week to video tape a week's worth of Astro shows. KFH Radio had asked Tom to come back to work for them part time doing the afternoon show, which he accepted. When his contract finally expired at KARD, he also began working for Bob Walterscheid's advertising and commercial agency. Later on, Tom formed his own radio and television advertising agency, handling some of the biggest business merchants in Wichita. Pressure from the business was beginning to take its toll on Tom, so he eventually gave it up. Not one to be lying around, Tom went to work for Cablevision later on, writing and producing commercials plus doing some of the voice work on them. During the 1980s, Tom went back to KSAS-TV and brought back the "Major Astro Show" for awhile.

During the spring of 1985 I was working with the Air Capital Comics shop here in Wichita as a consultant. The owners, Jeff and Paul Leader, had formed the KAF - The Kansas Alliance of Fandom - and decided to sponsor a comic book and gaming convention with the idea of inviting Tom Leahy to be the special guest. Once Tom agreed to come to the show, I told the convention committee that I would volunteer to prepare a special program booklet to hand out at the convention for this momentous event. One of the things I offered to do was interview Tom Leahy and include it in the booklet. The convention was scheduled for June 28, 1986, which gave me over a year to get the job done.

For me, the chance of meeting up with Tom Leahy again was very exciting. I remembered back to the first time I had met him in June of 1958. I was 10 years old at the time. Tom and Lee Parsons - who played the first "Rodney" on Nightmare - had started their own HOST AND RODNEY firecracker stand business. One of their two locations was very near the intersection of K-15 and McArthur road, just on the outskirts of Wichita. This happened to be a few blocks from my house in Sunview Heights. My brother and I were big followers of "NIGHTMARE" and when we saw the sign, we made our parents stop so we could meet THE HOST and RODNEY, who by the way, were in full make-up, greeting customers in the very hot hundred degree heat. You gotta hand it to those guys for being dedicated to the cause. We also got both Leahy and Parsons' autographs that day on a small piece of paper which, over the coming



Vintage Rodney and Host autographs that Roger Hill and his brother got at the Leahy firecracker stand in 1958.

years, disappeared into the void somewhere (more on that later).

But getting back to the Astro Convention, and 1985, I called Tom to coordinate a date and time that I could drop by to do the interview for the convention program booklet. On March 9, 1985, I brought my cassette tape recorder with me to Tom's house and we sat for a couple of hours reviewing his years of working in radio and television. It was a rare opportunity for me to see Tom again and when I told him about the firecracker stand meeting over 25 years earlier, he laughed and told me "We were idiots. Sheer stupidity. Somebody said...you can make a lot of money in one week if you own a firecracker stand. Rodney and I said to each other, hey...we can make personal appearances and double our business. If we came out of that with \$60 each, we were lucky. We had two of them and we ran from one to the other. It was June-July and with make-up on, sweating to make personal appearances as The Host and Rodney. The wives with sweat running off, hair stringing down. I'd go up to her...how's it going honey? She'd respond, rottin!!!"

I asked Tom during our discussion how his eyes were so effective and eerie looking as the Host on Nightmare? I thought he used some kind of special contact lenses. He responded "No...I have what is referred to as double eyes. A lot of white below the Iris. So all I have to do is kind of roll them back up into my head and the white stands out. Fish eyes I think they're called." He went on to elaborate "I'd spend a couple of days writing the script. In those days we had no video tapes, so we'd start rehearsing at 7:30 at night, when it went on at 10:30. Sometimes we had to work out some of the tricky effects. We'd rehearse without make-up of course, and then about 10:00 or so we would start with the make-up. We got a flat fee for "NIGHTMARE". Lee got a great big \$15 and I got \$25 because I wrote it. That was it, that's how much we made for doing the show. The whole thing. Well, what the heck, we were having a good time."



I then queried Tom if there was any particular source for ideas that he incorporated into the show, such as old radio shows, comic books, movies, friends suggestions, etc.? He told me "Yes, suggestions...I took, those. Occasionally I'd ask somebody to give me an idea, you know, something to write for this week. But to answer the first part of that question, no, I didn't key that show on any previous thing that had been done. The concept, the macabre make-up and all that, certainly, we borrowed that from horror movies we had seen. Also, I'm trying to think....there was some movie in particular I saw that kind of appealed to me. A satire on



horror. I don't remember who was in it, maybe Vincent Price or perhaps Peter Lorre, I can't remember. Also Alice In Wonderland may have influenced me a bit, you know, the abnormality and all. Because we acted like we were totally normal in this environment, and we weren't."

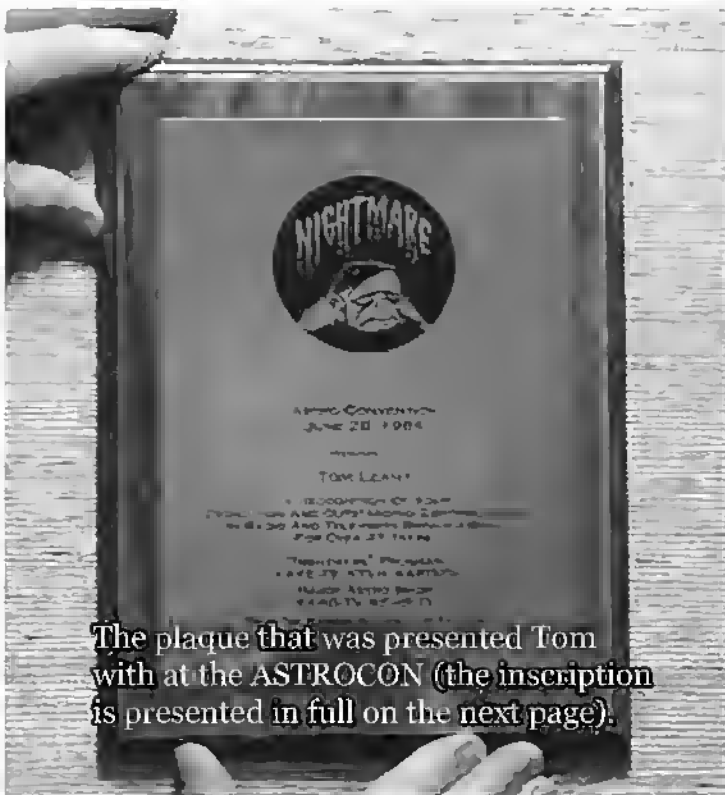
Another question I put to Tom was who came up with the idea of "THE MAJOR ASTRO SHOW", and how did he get the part? His reply was "Elmer Childress was doing a kid's show called 'THE KARD GANG CLUB' at that time. KARD was changing their whole image. They had hired Ollie Thompson for a two man news team with Dave Wilson. They were just trying to flip flop their image. The space program was going really great at that time and so Gene Cantfield, who was a salesman and a guy who I respected a lot for his creativity, came up with an idea of doing an astronaut for a kid's show. They were going to dress Elmer up in a spacesuit. Thank God they didn't because Elmer gained too much weight after that anyway. So Gene said, I know the guy to do it. He called me over at KFJH Radio and told me to go over and interview for it and see what they thought. Fortunately I had lost quite a bit of weight at that time. So I went over there and they said fine, you're the one. Gene Cantfield was the one who came up with the name of Major Astro. As--tro--naut, get it?"



Tom Leahy as Wichita television host Major Astro.

When I asked him if he enjoyed doing the "Astro Show" as well as "Nightmare," his response was: "No. As well as Nightmare? No. I'll put it this way. 'Astro' once in a while was a challenge, creative, you know. Especially when we'd take trips to the planets and things like that. That was fine. But 'Nightmare' was a trip every time we did it, once a week. We did our kicks on 'Nightmare'. I did enjoy the personal appearance aspects of 'Astro', because I love children. Really love them...small children. The kids would come up to you and they were just totally honest. It's like going up to Santa Claus. They love you, and well, I transmitted my love back to them. I enjoyed that. I remember going to a personal appearance and a little kid said 'I didn't know you had all those wrinkles.' (laughter) Cosmic bombardment I'd say." (More laughter).

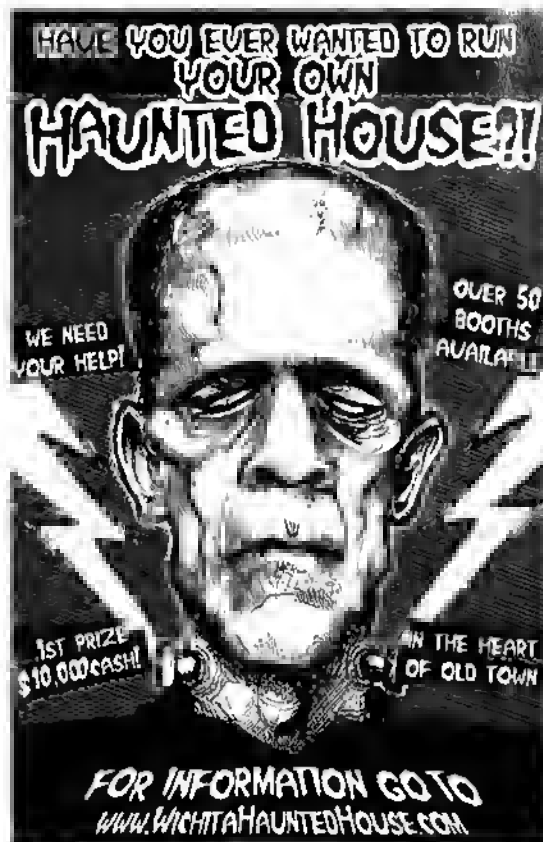
But getting back to the Astro Convention, the big day finally arrived. The convention was held at the old Park Inn motel (no longer standing) located on North Broadway. Hundreds of people showed up for this event. We of the Kansas Alliance of Fandom had decided to give Tom Leahy a special plaque with a cartoon depiction of "The Host," engraved on it, plus some special words of thanks from the Wichita fans of radio and television. Here's the words we came up with: "Presented to Tom Leahy in recognition of your dedication and outstanding



The plaque that was presented Tom with at the ASTROCON (the inscription is presented in full on the next page).

contributions in radio and television broadcasting for over 45 years. "Nightmare" program - KAKE-TV - KTVH - KARD TV. "Major Astro Show" KARD-TV - KSAS-TV. From the Kansas Alliance of Fandom."

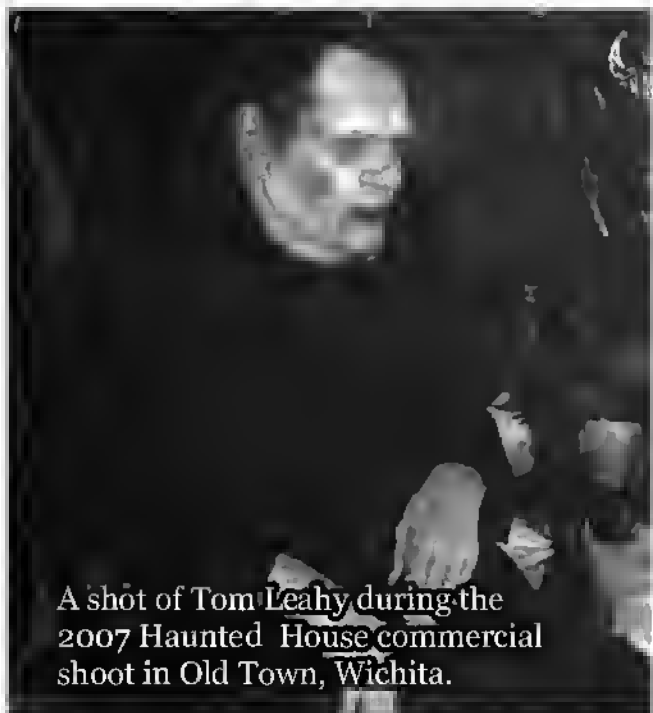
Tom arrived wearing his light blue Major Astro outfit and the crowd of people surrounded him asking for autographs and throwing questions at him left and right. Soon after, we ushered him to a panel set-up where Tom could continue answering questions. At one point we presented Tom with the plaque which he graciously accepted with some words of thanks.



Roger Hill with Tom Leahy as The Host during the 2007 video shoot. (left) The poster for the Haunted House event.

Many years ago, I kept wondering what had happened to the autographs of Tom Leahy and Lee Parsons that my brother and I had acquired during our visit to the HOST AND RODNEY firecracker stand in 1958. I spent hours looking through my collection of movie and television memorabilia and gave up on the quest many times during that process. Then one day while looking through a box of movie-related clippings from old TV Guides, I accidentally ran across the small piece of paper, which my brother had carefully laminated with Scotch tape, to sort of protect it. Naturally the tape had yellowed badly over the years, but I was one happy fellow to have finally found the missing autographs. I still have it neatly tucked away in my Tom Leahy file.

The last time I saw Tom Leahy was the final time he put on THE HOST make-up. Most Wichita folks may not know this but Tom's last appearance as THE HOST came on September 6, 2007, and it was only for an hour or so. At the time I was working for Island View Productions, a video production company located in downtown Wichita's "Old Town" district. The company had already used Tom on previous occasions when we needed voice-over work on commercials we were making so I had greeted him several times when he came in to work. I always struck up a conversation with him to reminisce a little about the old days. The owner of Island View at the time was in process of making some changes in the three-story building we occupied. Walls were being knocked out on the lower level of our building temporarily leaving a huge empty space before additional work was to begin. In August of 2007 the boss little about the old days. The owner of Island View at the time was in process of making some changes in the three-story building we occupied. Walls were being knocked out on the lower level of our building temporarily leaving a huge empty space before additional work was to begin. In August of 2007 the boss came up with a brainstorm idea during this period of construction. He called us employees together and made the following announcement: "With Halloween being only a month away, let's utilize this large space we have for a haunted house contest!" What? Huh? Yes, the idea was that we would hold a competition to see who could create the best haunted house in a space allocated within our building. The lower floor had enough room to fit approximately 30 or more haunted houses into it. Competitors would sign up and pay an entry fee of a few hundred dollars with the chance of winning the grand prize of \$10,000 dollars if they won! Wow! Us employees thought it was a pretty good idea, that is, if



A shot of Tom Leahy during the 2007 Haunted House commercial shoot in Old Town, Wichita.

enough people signed up. Shortly after that announcement all employees were assigned various tasks in order to make this thing happen on schedule. My job assignment was to get a hold of Tom Leahy and see if he would recreate THE HOST for us so that we could make some promotional commercials for this coming event. I was relieved to hear this. Wow, a chance to see Tom again, and even better, a chance to work with him making the commercial for our Haunted House event. By this time, Tom was more or less retired, but I called him up and after explaining the job to him, he quickly accepted. Shortly after that the date was set for the video shoot. Scripts were written about the big HAUNTED HOUSE event and a few dozen posters were printed off to place around town. Since I was a good lettering man, my job was now to prepare cue-cards for Tom to read during the shoot.

Sure enough, a week or so later, the hour had arrived and Tom showed up in full make-up, wearing his original THE HOST jacket which he had kept all those years and which was later donated to the Kansas Historical Society in Topeka. I couldn't believe it. Standing before me was the man himself! THE HOST! Once again I heard that familiar voice I had grown accustomed to over the years, greeting me with "Hi Roger, how you doing?" It was music to my ears. A make-shift studio had been set up in a room at the Board of Trade Building on South Market. This structure was also owned by my boss at the time and being used for several purposes. In the studio we had an old high-back chair ready for Tom to sit in. My cue-cards were all ready for him to deliver his spiel about the HAUNTED HOUSE contest.

After a few practice sessions, the camera started rolling and Tom started delivering his lines in rapid succession. We had a ball, laughing and joking and carrying on with Tom as he rattled off the dialog, flubbing a few lines and takes along the way, but making it all good in the end. I was having a ball flipping the cue-cards and watching him perform. Before I realized it, 45 minutes had elapsed and the taping was finished. There were five of us in the room with Tom and we all congratulated each other over how well it turned out. Tom seemed happy too and soon after was bidding us all goodbye and headed out. I escorted him to the front door and shook his hand and told him once again what a fine job he had done for us. It was the last time I ever saw Tom Leahy.

I didn't go to Tom's funeral. Frankly, I didn't think I could take it. I knew there would be hundreds of people there. I wanted to remember him in make-up and spouting his "Nightmare" dialog. I actually have a special performance on tape from my 1985 interview I did with Tom. During our conversation he had pulled out a stack of original typed "NIGHTMARE" scripts that he had saved from years earlier. He brought them out to show me and laid them on the table where we were taping. Toward the end of my interview, Tom grabbed one of the scripts and immediately transformed himself into THE HOST. He started spewing forth with the following: "Good evening....the violent chemical forces that foment cataclysmic meteorological maelstroms...that ignite the volatile spatial gases into blindingly white novae...have now channeled the currents of time into the perimeter of this dark inlet and once again the shadowed hours have arrived!! A bacchanalia is afoot!!! A rouncy revel...a ghoulish gambol, entitled...."Nightmare"!

I was in awe of Tom Leahy's talents and considered him a friend and true gentleman from the old school. He was an inspiration to many of us, and still is for me. Many years ago I even tried to follow in his footsteps when I tried out for a horror host job at KAKE-TV. This would not of happened if not for NIGHTMARE and Tom Leahy. I will never forget him. Rest in peace ole friend. - Roger Hill, © 2015

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IT CAME FROM SPACE...TO STALK THE EARTH!

# GREEN HELL FROM THE VOID

Produced and Directed by TOM LEAHY JR.

by Richard Chamberlain

Whenever a rare or long-lost film is discovered, it's like finding a treasure chest of gold for film lovers. Sure, every now and then you find the equivalent of Al Capone's vault but most of the time, the film is a fun glimpse into a past long forgotten. Writer/producer/director Tom Leahy is best known for his television work as *The Host* and *Major Astro*, not to mention his 1965 horror flick **The Beast from the Beginning of Time**. However, Tom also worked on another film and now everyone has a chance to see it. Behold the film known as **Green Hell from the Void** (1968).

I first became aware of this film in the fall of 2014 when I met Joel Sanderson, better known to many as Gunther Dedmund on **The Basement Sublet of Horror**. Joel had acquired Tom's first film years ago and unleashed it upon a hungry audience. It was at that time that he first heard about **Green Hell from the Void**. However, he lost contact with Tom before seeing the film or finding out if the film still existed. Tom had mentioned it once in a 1981 newspaper article written by Bob Curtright. Published in the *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, the article was hyping the television debut of **The Beast from the Beginning of Time**. Tom mentioned it casually as being a pilot but nothing more. The question remained whether or not the film was still in one piece and, if so, who had it. With Tom passing away in 2010, the fear was that we might never know.

Enter writer and podcast legend Derek M. Koch. Derek is well-known for his love of the horror genre through various podcasts including **Monster Kid Radio** and **1951 Down Place**. After hearing that another Tom Leahy film may exist, I reached out to Derek to tell him as I knew he would be as excited as I was. After all, **The Beast from the Beginning of Time** played a huge part in why the Monster Movie Kid blog exists. Joel knew that some of Tom Leahy's estate material was given to the Kansas Historical Society, which I mentioned to Derek. Derek quickly went online and discovered that the film was listed

as being in the possession of the Kansas Historical Society. I shared this news with Joel, who quickly contacted them and arranged for a meeting. Sure enough, they had the film and Joel was able to view it. So, was this movie all we had hoped for?

First, let's acknowledge that the film is incomplete and only runs about 12 minutes. It was apparently intended to be a pilot for a potential television series. Why production stopped is just one of the mysteries still surrounding this previously lost gem. We do know that Tom was involved in the production, most likely being the writer and director as well.



The film cleaning and preview station at the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. Set to view the film for Joel.



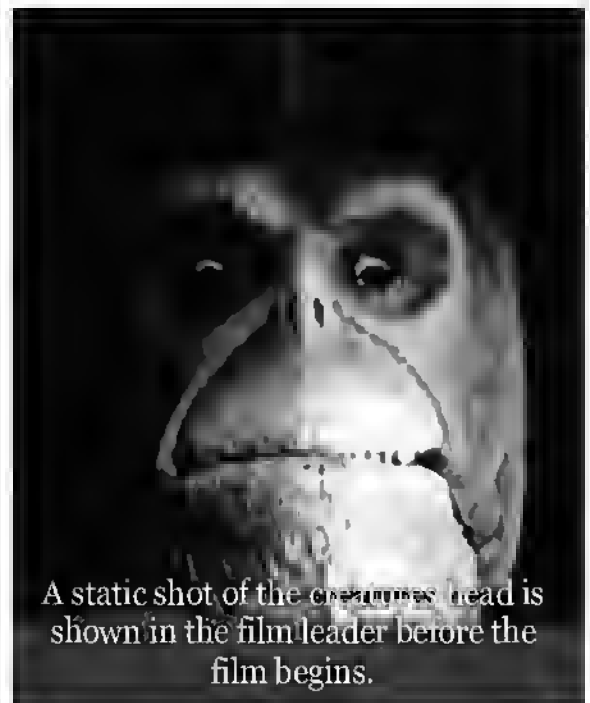
The film can that the movie print is stored in.

However, the identity of the lead actor remains a mystery. It was filmed in 1968, based on a Sedgwick County car tag. While the story takes place in "Las Mesas", the sign is obviously a fake and the scenery clearly looks like Kansas. There is a shot of a gas station and a Del Sueno Motel. It's unclear whether this motel was real or simply staged. It was filmed in color and is in really good condition; especially considering that it most likely has been collecting dust in a film can for decades.

The film starts with an image of a monster head. It is a lizard-like creature that reminded me of the Sleestaks from the 1970s TV series **Land of the Lost**. We see a reference to Group 5 Productions, which may have been Tom's production company. The story begins

with a man at a campfire listening to a radio announcer talking about UFOs. A spacecraft flies overhead and crashes. The man goes to investigate and discovers it is a small craft releasing a mysterious fog. An explosion then knocks him unconscious. The next day, we see him driving on a highway, passing a sign for Las Mesas. He then checks into the Del Sueno Motel. He encounters a shady motel clerk (Dick Welsbacher) and identifies himself as Jim Smith, which is likely a fake name based on his mannerisms. The clerk sees the Sedgwick County car tag and makes a reference to him being from out of town. As Smith walks away, the clerk turns on a radio and we hear Spanish music, trying to add to the perception that we are possibly in New Mexico.

In the next scene, we see Smith racing to his car at night in a parking lot (which does not appear to be at the motel). He is



A static shot of the creature's head is shown in the film leader before the film begins.



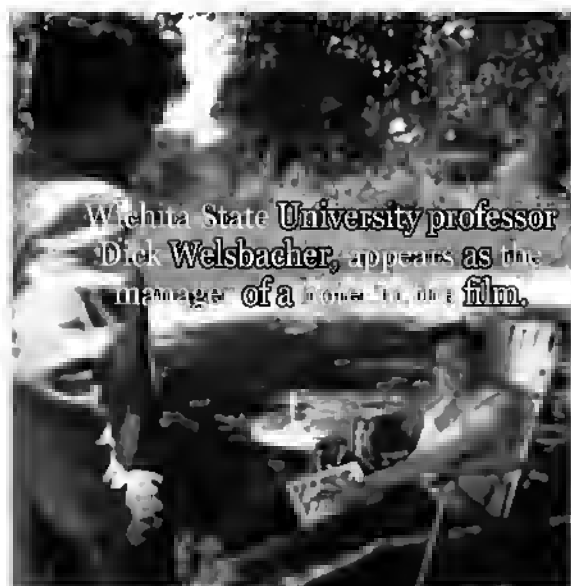
breathing hard and looks down at his hands. They are changing into a reptilian-like texture. He begins driving on a highway and is clearly in distress. He is transforming and seems disoriented. His hands are turning into claws with scales on his face and he begins to hiss like a snake. He stops and picks up a hitchhiker. Once in the car, he turns to the hitchhiker and we see the reptilian face that we saw at the very beginning. He begins clawing at the hitchhiker and draws blood which is clearly visible on his arm. The hitchhiker tries to get away from the creature but is attacked and is apparently killed. And then, the screen fades out.

Where the story was going to go after that remains a mystery. Was this going to be an anthology series? Was it inspired by **The Invaders** television series? Unfortunately, we may never know for sure. Without knowing who the main actor is and with Tom no longer with us, the only source of information at the time the film was discovered was Professor Richard (Dick)

Welsbacher. Unfortunately, he passed away in July 2015. Joel Sanderson continues to research as he has a strong connection to Tom Leahy and this film. He has vivid memories of his neighbor Ralph Seeley working on the spaceship effects in his garage. So, there is still hope that we will discover more about **Green Hell from the Void**.

For now, the short film is available for everyone to see on the Internet Archive website. Check it out and, while you're there, you might also be interested in other rare treasures from Tom Leahy. Joel has uploaded a lot of the existing 1950s **Nightmare** material featuring Tom Leahy as The Host. There is also an unre-

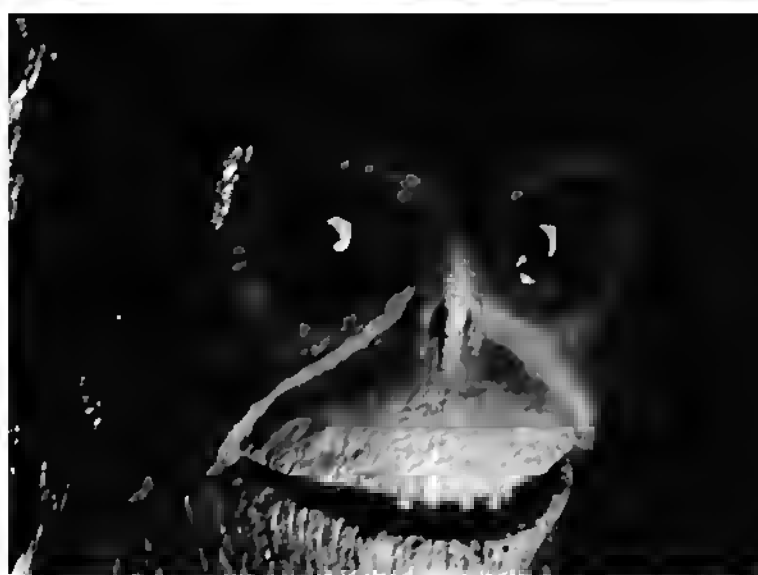
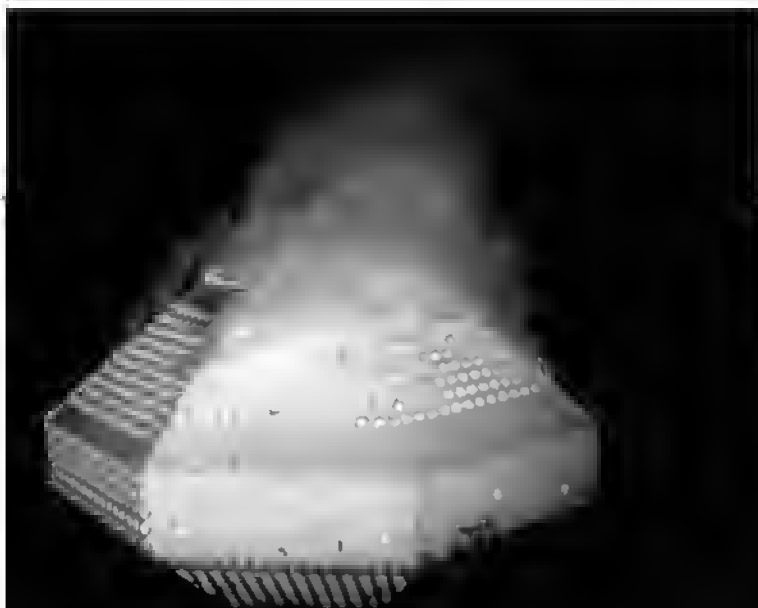
leased marketing promo for Tom's attempted 1970s revival of **Nightmare**. It was intended to be shown to television stations in hopes of getting **Nightmare** syndicated. Ultimately, it did get revived on channel 24 KSAS around 1990 and ran for a short period of time before it left the airwaves once again. Joel has taken that footage and incorporated it into a special presentation of **The Beast** from the Beginning of Time. I'm sure you'll enjoy it.



Wichita State University professor Dick Welsbacher, appears as the manager of a hotel in the film.

Special thanks to Joel Sanderson and the Kansas Historical Society for making this film available and to Derek M. Koch for that late night conversation which led to its rediscovery.

# GREEN HELL FROM THE VOID FILM STILL GALLERY





# MAJOR ASTRO, CIRCA 1970

by Scott Phillips

In Wichita we had several memorable kiddie show hosts (Cap'n Bill, played by Bill MacLain, Freddie Fudd, supposedly Elmer's cousin, played by Henry Harvey) but none loomed as large in our little cartoon-addled minds as Channel Three's Major Astro, played by Tom Leahy, who also served as The Host on KARD's late-night horror movie show "Nightmare" (the prime inspiration for Joel Sanderson's brilliant "Basement Sublet of Horror").

The show began in the days of the Mercury program, but as you can see by the Moon-base set above, it was still running well into the Apollo years.



Here the Major waves, looking like he's giving his signature sign-off line, "Happy orbits, boys and girls!" I met Tom once when my friend Jeff Killian interviewed him in his home, and I was running one of two video cameras. In the interview, Tom was very, very funny, (he referred to the character as "The Major") and afterwards he invited us to have a drink with him. Jeff and the other cameraman demurred, as it was before noon, but I wasn't by God going to pass up the chance to have a snort with Major Astro. He gave me a glass of white wine and said, "I believe I'll have something stronger myself." Then he poured himself a good-sized tumbler of scotch.



The viewing screen behind him to his left is where the cartoons would first appear before going full-screen. I believe Jeff gave me these pictures in the late 1980s to print; I just found them in a box of old slides. Most likely they came from The Major himself. Tom died a year or two ago, mourned by thousands of Wichita's former kiddie-show viewers. Rest in Peace, Major!



Ink drawing by artist Dan Rempel

# WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MAJOR ASTRO?

Written by Richard Chamberlain

For any child of the 1960s, there were certain things that were a constant in any neighborhood. Whether it was trading comic books, making monster models or watching cool TV shows like *Star Trek* or *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, these were always the hot topic of conversations on the playground. But one topic that appealed to both kids and their parents was the space race. So, it was not a surprise that as our eyes kept looking towards the stars, one hero rose out of the stardust and, for several years, his star was shining bright. The one and only Major Astro!



But who was Major Astro? Where did he come from and, more importantly, where did he go? The year was 1962. The Russians had already sent a dog into space on Sputnik 2 and the Americans sent Alan Shepard to complete the first pilot-controlled space flight. But we wanted to reach the moon. Or maybe, we already had? That same year, a mysterious figure from NASA emerged by the name of Major Astro. Little was known about him except that he was orbiting Earth in a space station. From some 36,000 miles above Earth, orbiting this globe we call home, Major Astro would begin to send transmissions to the children below. More specifically, he was reaching out to the children of Kansas.

Major Astro arranged for his special transmissions to be received by channel 3, KARD, the NBC television affiliate in Wichita, Kansas. The signal would be carried throughout most of the state, ensuring that thousands of children would not only be entertained but educated. Major Astro wanted to make sure the children of Kansas would learn about space through such educational shows as *Space Explorers* or *Journey to the Beginning of Time*. But he also knew the hard-working children needed a break after school and during the summer months. So he would play a variety of cartoons from the action-adventure tales of Superman to the zany stories of Wally Gator. Major Astro even arranged for his pal *Space Angel* to share his exploits.

As the 1960s progressed, Major Astro would even come down to Earth and visit the children of Kansas. Sometimes at a parade while other times he would arrange for tours of the KARD television station. And as NASA continued to publically advance towards the 1969 moon landing, children saw Major Astro establish a moon base before going even further out to Mars and Venus. His space suit would change as well as NASA continued with the Apollo space program. At peak transmissions, it was estimated that nearly 90% of children watching TV in the afternoons were watching Major Astro. Then, suddenly, in 1973, the transmissions stopped.

Nobody was sure what happened. Maybe it was technical difficulties or perhaps evil corporate forces intercepted the messages. Many preferred to believe that Major Astro had simply moved on to a new and top

secret mission. Whatever the case, the signals stopped and for the next 12 years, Major Astro was gone. With each passing year, the children who followed his exploits got older and the memories began to fade. Nostalgia would occasionally strike but Major Astro never returned. That was until 1985.

Wichita launched a new television station that year with channel 24 KSAS. The station managers believed they had tracked down the elusive Major Astro. After many clandestine visits with the men in black, Major Astro resurfaced. His secret mission over, he was now part of the NASA space shuttle program and he wanted to connect with a new generation. Now in orbit around Earth in a space shuttle, he launched Space Patrol 24 as it was time for the children of Kansas to rediscover the wonders of outer space. With some 24,000 members, Major Astro would bring forth new cartoons like **G.I. Joe** and **Transformers** while returning down to Earth for special appearances. Many of his original followers were now watching as their own children were faithful followers of Major Astro.

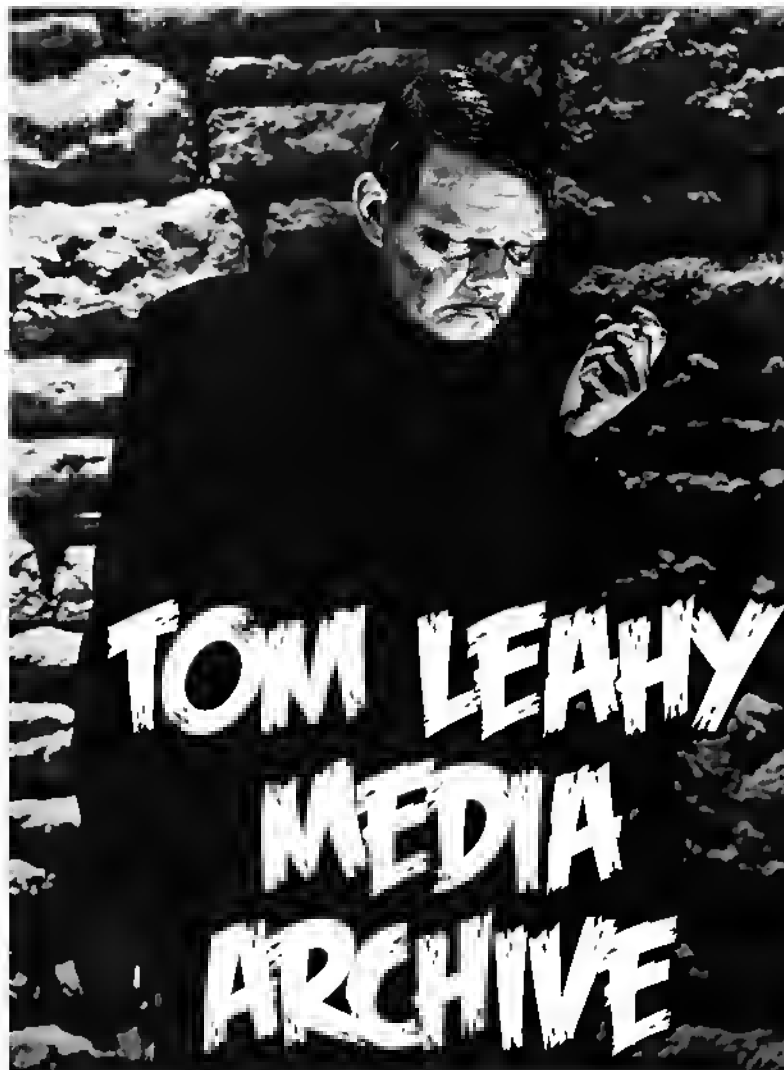
But, just as quickly as he returned, he seemed to disappear once again. A new mission would pull him off the air. There would be the occasional sighting at a restaurant, often in disguise as someone known as Tom Leahy, but we all knew who he really was. He may have been gone off TV but none of us ever forgot about Major Astro.

Sadly, Major Astro completed his last mission in 2010 at the age of 87. The next generation will never know the thrill of racing home after school to tune into Major Astro as he served as both educator and entertainer. But the memories are still strong with those of us who followed his exploits. And through the wonders of technology, somewhere out there at the edge of our galaxy and beyond, those transmissions live on. And I wouldn't be surprised if some young alien in Andromeda was watching him right now.

*Rest in peace Major Astro...  
and happy orbits!*







Early background image used in the opening sequence of Nightmare.

# TOM LEAHY: EARLY BROADCAST YEARS



# MAJOR ASTRO: MEDIA COLLECTION



COURTESY OF  DAIRY FOODS



MONDAY through FRIDAY - 400 P.M. on the KANSAS STATE NETWORK CHANNE



# PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH



Wichita, Kansas' TOM LEAHY



Tom Leahy (Major Astro) shovels some of the 62,000 entries from the Major Astro space word contest... Breaking all existing records for any contest in the four-state area covered by the Kansas State Network, channels 2, 3, 4 and 5. Right, Tom on one of his many personal appearance tours in Kansas.



THE STATE OF Kansas has launched the first television astronaut from the midwest! Tom Leahy better known in Wichita as KARD-TV's Major Astro appears Monday through Saturday on *The Major Astro Show*. It is the most popular program in the area for children. The program combines space age education along with entertainment. Major Astro takes

his audience on simulated space trips to other planets with pictures and lectures on the physical make-up and the chance of life existing on the planets. There have been live demonstrations of space age equipment such as Telstar. The young viewers also enjoy a new three-part educational series entitled *Space Explorers*, *Undersea Explorers* and *Journey to the Be-*

*ginning of Time*. The show also has its share of pure entertainment. Cartoons are a favorite with the children and they especially enjoy: *Space Angel*, *Superstar*, *Superman* and the new Hanna-Barbera cartoons—*Wally Gator*, *Touché Turtle* and *Lippy the Lion*. The show has not only been received well by children but by parents and educators as well. It's strictly A-Okay! ●

TV AND MOVIE SCREEN

49



ALMOST AS POPULAR AS SANTA CLAUS—Major Astro, of television kiddie show fame, greeted, signed autographs and patiently visited with an estimated 650 children at his person appearance in Oakley Saturday morning. A similar total of young people attended free afternoon space movie and town was crowded with shopping adults. Area C, of C. program was described as a big success. Renee Stramel, 6, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Stramel, meets Major Astro. (Graphic Photo)



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*She was sweet, gentle, kind--o sort of Mortion Old Mother Hubbord. But when she went to her cupboard ...*

# ONE MARTIAN AFTERNOON

*By Tom Leahy*

(originally published in "If Worlds" of Science Fiction July 1953)



The clod burst in a cloud of red sand and the little Martian sand dog ducked quickly into his burrow. Marilou threw another at the aperture in the ground and then ran over and with the inside of her foot she scraped sand into it until it was filled to the surface. She started to leave, but stopped.

The little fellow might choke to death, she thought, it wasn't his fault she had to live on Mars. Satisfied that the future of something was dependent on her whim, she dug the sand from the hole. His little yellow eyes peered out at her.

"Go on an' live," she said magnanimously.

She got up and brushed the sand from her knees and dress, and walked slowly down the red road. The noon sun was relentless; nowhere was there relief from it. Marilou squinted and shaded her eyes with her hand. She looked in the sky for one of those infrequent Martian rain clouds, but the deep blue was only occasionally spotted by fragile white puffs. Like the sun, they had no regard for her, either. They were too concerned with moving toward the distant mountains, there to cling momentarily to the peaks and then continue on their endless route.

Marilou dabbed the moisture from her forehead with the hem of her dress. "I know one thing," she mumbled.

"When I grow up, I'll get to Earth an' never come back to Mars, no matter what!"

She broke into a defiant, cadenced step.

"An' I won't care whether you an' Mommy like it or not!" she declared aloud, sticking out her chin at an imaginary father before her.

Before she realized it, a tiny, lime-washed stone house appeared not a hundred yards ahead of her. That was the odd thing about the Martian midday; something small and miles away would suddenly become large and very near as you approached it.

The heat waves did it, her father had told her. "Really?" she had replied, and--you think you know so doggone much, she had thought.

"Aunt Twylee!" She broke into a run. By the Joshua trees, through the stone gateway she ran, and with a leap she lit like a young frog on the porch. "Hi, Aunt Twylee!" she said breathlessly.

An ancient Martian woman sat in a rocking chair in the shade of the porch. She held a bowl of purple river apples in her lap. Her papyrus-like hands moved quickly as she shaved the skin from one. In a matter of seconds it was peeled. She looked up over her bifocals at the panting Marilou.

"Gracious, child, you shouldn't run like that this time of day," she said. "You Earth children aren't used to our Martian heat. It'll make you sick if you run too much."

"I don't care! I hate Mars! Sometimes I wish I could just get good an' sick, so's I'd get to go home!"

"Marilou, you are a little tyrant!" Aunt Twylee laughed.

"Watcha' doin', Aunt Twylee?" Marilou asked, getting up from her frog posture and coming near the old Martian lady's chair.

"Oh, peeling apples, dear. I'm going to make a cobbler this afternoon." She dropped the last apple, peeled, into the bowl. "There, done. Would you like a little cool apple juice, Marilou?"

"Sure--you betcha! Hey, could I watch you make the cobbler, Aunt Twylee, could I? Mommy can't make it for anything--it tastes like glue. Maybe, if I could see how you do it, maybe I could show her. Do you think?"

"Now, Marilou, your mother must be a wonderful cook to have raised such a healthy little girl. I'm sure there's nothing she could learn from me," Aunt Twylee said as she arose. "Let's go inside and have that apple juice."

The kitchen was dark and cool, and filled with the odors of the wonderful edibles the old Martian had created on and in the Earth-made stove. She opened the Earth-made refrigerator that stood in the corner and withdrew an Earth-made bottle filled with Martian apple juice.

Marilou jumped up on the table and sat cross-legged.

"Here, dear." Aunt Twylee handed her a glass of the icy liquid.

"Ummm, thanks," Marilou said, and gulped down half the contents. "That tastes dreamy, Aunt Twylee."

The little girl watched the old Martian as she lit the oven and gathered the necessary ingredients for the cobbler. As she bent over to get a bowl from the shelf beneath Marilou's perch, her hair brushed against the child's knee. Her hair was soft, soft and white as a puppy's, soft and white like the down from a dandelion. She smiled at Marilou. She always smiled; her pencil-thin mouth was a perpetual arc.

Marilou drained the glass. "Aunt Twylee--is it true what my daddy says about the Martians?"

"True? How can I say, dear? I don't know what he said."

"Well, I mean, that when us Earth people came, you Martians did inf ... infan ..."

"Infanticide?" Aunt Twylee interrupted, rolling the dough on the board a little flatter, a little faster.

"Yes, that's it--killed babies," Marilou said, and took an apple from the bowl. "My daddy says you were real primitive, an' killed your babies for some silly religious reason. I think that's awful! How could it be religious? God couldn't like to have little babies killed!" She took a big bite of the apple; the juice ran from the corners of her mouth.

"Your daddy is a very intelligent man, Marilou, but he's partially wrong. It is true--but not for religious reasons. It was a necessity. You must remember, dear, Mars is very arid--sterile--unable to sustain many living things. It was awful, but it was the only way we knew to control the population."

Marilou looked down her button nose as she picked a brown spot from the apple. "Hmmph, I'll tell 'im he's wrong," she said. "He thinks he knows so damn much!"

"Marilou!" Aunt Twylee exclaimed as she looked over her glasses. "A sweet child like you shouldn't use such language!"

Marilou giggled and popped the remaining portion of the apple in her mouth.

"Do your parents know where you are, child?" Aunt Twylee asked, as she took the bowl from Marilou's hands. She began dicing the apples into a dough-lined casserole.

"No, they don't," Marilou replied. She sprayed the air with little particles of apple as she talked. "Everybody's gone to the hills to look for the boys."

"The boys?" Aunt Twylee stopped her work and looked at the little girl.

"Yes--Jimmy an' Eddie an' some of the others disappeared from the settlement this morning. The men're afraid they've run off to th' hills an' the renegades got 'em."

"Gracious," Aunt Twylee said; her brow knitted into a criss-cross of wrinkles.

"Oh, I know those dopes. They're prob'ly down at th' canals--fishin' or somep'n."

"Just the same, your mother will be frantic, dear. You should have told her where you were going."

"I don't care," Marilou said with unadulterated honesty. "She'll be all right when I get home."

Aunt Twylee shook her head and clucked her tongue.

"Can I have another glass? Please?"

The old lady poured the glass full again. And then she sprinkled sugar down among the apple cubes in the casserole and covered them with a blanket of dough. She cut an uneven circle of half moons in it and put it in the oven. "There--all ready to bake, Marilou," she sighed.

"It looks real yummy, Aunt Twylee."

"Well, I certainly hope it turns out good, dear," she said, wiping her forehead with her apron. She looked out the open back door. The landscape was beginning to gray as heavier clouds moved down from the mountains and pressed the afternoon heat closer, more oppressively to the ground. "My, it's getting hot. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if we didn't get a little rain this afternoon, Marilou." She turned back to the little girl. "Tell me some more about your daddy, dear. We Martians certainly owe a lot to men like your father."

"That's what he says too. He says, you Martians would have died out in a few years, if we hadn't come here. We're so much more civi ... civili ..."

"Civilized?"

"Yeah. He says, we were so much more 'civ-ilized' than you that we saved your lives when we came here with all our modern stuff."

"Well, that's true enough, dear. Just look at that wonderful Earth stove," Aunt Twylee said, and laughed. "We wouldn't be able to bake an apple cobbler like that without it, would we?"

A rumble of thunder shouldered through the crowded hot air.

"No. He says, you Martians are kinda likeable, but you can't be trusted. He's nuts! I like you Martians!"

"Thank you, child, but everyone's entitled to his own opinion. Don't judge your daddy too severely," Aunt Twylee said as she scraped spilled sugar from the table and put little bits of it on her tongue.

"He says that you'd bite th' hand that feeds you. He says, we brought all these keen things to Mars, an' that if you got th' chance, you'd kill all of us!"

"Gracious," said Aunt Twylee as she speared scraps of dough with the point of her long paring knife.

"He's a dope!" Marilou said.

Aunt Twylee opened the oven and peeked in at the cobbler. The aroma of the simmering apples rushed out and filled the room.

"Could I have some cobbler when it's done?" Marilou asked, her mouth filling with saliva.

"I'm afraid not, child. It's getting rather late."

The thunder rumbled again--a little closer, a little louder.

The old lady washed the blade of the knife in the sink. "Tell me more of what your father says, dear," she said as she adjusted the bifocals on her thin nose and ran her thumb along the length of the knife's blade.

"Oh, nothin' much more. He just says that you'd kill us if you had th' chance. That's the way the inferior races always act, he says. They want to kill th' people that help 'em, 'cause they resent 'em."

"Very interesting."

"Well, it isn't so, is it, Aunt Twylee?"

The room was filled with blinding blue-white light, and the walls quaked at the sound of a monstrous thunderclap.

The old Martian glanced nervously at the clock on the wall. "My, it is getting late," she said as she fondled the knife in her hands.

"You Martians wouldn't do anything like that, would you?"

"You want the truth, don't you, dear?" Aunt Twylee asked, smiling, as she walked to the table where Marilou sat.

"Course I do, Aunt Twylee," she said.

Her scream was answered and smothered by the horrendous roar of the thunder, and the piercing hiss of the rain that fell in sheets. In great volumes of water, it fell, as though the heavens were attempting to wash the sins of man from the universe and into non-existence in the void beyond the void.

Marilou lay beside the other children. Aunt Twylee smiled at them, closed the bedroom door and returned to the kitchen.

The storm had moved on; the thunder was the faint grumbling of a pacified old man. What water fell was a monotonous trickle from the eaves of the lime-washed stone house. Aunt Twylee washed the blood from the knife and wiped it dry on her apron. She opened the oven and took out the browned cobbler. Sweet apple juice bubbled to the surface through the half moons and burst in delights of sugary aroma. The sun broke through the thinning edge of the thunderhead.

Aunt Twylee brushed a lock of her feathery white hair from her moist cheek. "Gracious," she said, "I must tidy up a bit before the others come."

The End



# NIGHTMARE: COLLECTED MEDIA



The classic opening television screen image from "Nightmare".



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EATING HOUSES



*By Tom Leahy*

(Originally published in "IF Worlds of Science Fiction" March 1954)

[Sidenote: Pettigill was, you might say, in tune with the world. It wouldn't even have been an exaggeration to say the world was in tune with Pettigill. Then somebody struck a sour note....]

The little man said, "Why, Mr. Bartle, come in. This is indeed a pleasure." His pinched face was lighted with an enthusiastic smile.

"You know my name, so I suppose you know the Bulletin sent me for a personality interview," the tall man who stood in the doorway said in a monotone as if it were a statement he had made a thousand times—which he had.

"Oh, certainly, Mr. Bartle. I was informed by Section Secretary Andrews this morning. I must say, I am greatly honored by this visit, too. Oh heavens, here I am letting you stand in the doorway. Excuse my discourtesy, sir--come in, come in," the little man said, and hustled the bored Bartle into a great room.

The walls of the room were lined by gray metal boxes that had spools of reproduction tape mounted on their vertical fronts--tape recorders, hundreds of them.

"I have a rather lonely occupation, Mr. Bartle, and sometimes the common courtesies slip my mind. It is a rather grievous fault and I beg you to overlook it. It would be rather distressing to me if Section Secretary Andrews were to hear of it; he has a rather intolerant attitude toward such faux pas. Do you understand what I mean? Not that I'm dissatisfied with my superior--perish the thought, it's just that--"

"Don't worry, I won't breathe a word," the tall man interrupted without looking at the babbling fellow shuffling along at his side. "Mr. Pettigill, I don't want to keep you from your work

for too long, so I'll just get a few notes and make up the bulk of the story back at the paper." Bartle searched the room with his eyes. "Don't you have a chair in this place?"

"Oh, my gracious, yes. There goes that old discourtesy again, eh?" the little man, Pettigill, said with a dry laugh. He scurried about the room like a confused squirrel until he spotted a chair behind his desk. "My chair. My chair for you, Mr. Bartle!" Again the dry laugh.

"Thanks, Mr. Pettigill."

"Arthur. Call me Arthur. Formality really isn't necessary among Mid Echelon, do you think? Section Secretary Andrews has often requested I call him Morton, but I just can't seem to bring myself to such informality. After all, he is Sub-Prime Echelon. It makes one uncomfortable, shall we say, to step out of one's class?" He stopped talking and the corners of his mouth dropped quickly as if he had just been given one minute to live. "You--you are only Mid Echelon, aren't you? I mean, if you are Sub-Prime, I shouldn't be--"

"Relax, Mr. Pettigill--'Arthur'--I am Mid Echelon. And I'm only that because my father was a man of far more industry than I; I inherited my classification."

"So? Well, now. Interesting--very. He must have been a great man, a great man, Mr. Bartle." "So I am told, Arthur. But let's get on with it," Bartle said, taking some scrap paper and a pencil stub from his tunic pocket. "Now, tell me about yourself and the Melopsych Center."

"Well," the little man began with a sigh and blinked his eyes peculiarly as though he were mentally shuffling events and facts like a deck of cards. "Well, I--my life would be of little interest, but the Center is of the utmost importance. That's it--I am no more than a physical extremity that functions in accord with the vital life that courses through the great physique of the Center! No more--I ask no more than to serve the Center and in turn, my fellow citizens, whether they be Prime, Sub-Prime, Mid, or even Sub-Lower!"

He stopped speaking, affecting a martyr-like pose. Bartle covered a smile with his hand.

"Well, Bartle, as you know, the Center--the Melopsych Center, a thoroughly inadequate name for the installation I might say--is the point of broadcast for these many taped musical selections contrived by Mass Psych as a therapeutic treatment for the various Echelon levels. It is the Great Psychiatrist--the Father Confessor. For where can one bare one's soul, or soothe one's nerves and disposition frayed by a day's endeavor, better than in the tender yet firm embrace of music?"

Bartle was straining to follow the train of thought that was lost in the camouflage of Pettigill's flowery phraseology.

"You see all about you these many recorders, Mr. Bartle?"

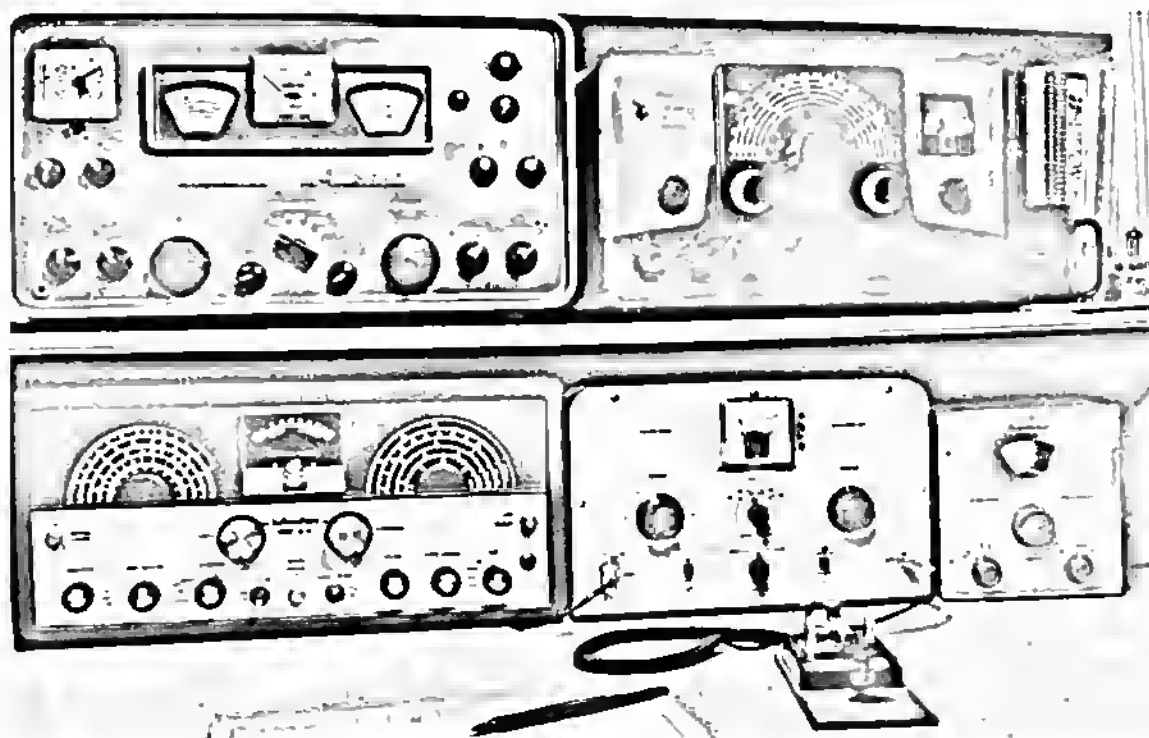
Bartle nodded.

"On those machines, sir, are spools of tape. Music tapes, all music. My heavens, every kind:

classical music, jazz, western, all kinds of music. Some tapes are no more than a single melodious note, sustained for whatever length of time necessary to relax and please the Echelon level home it is being beamed to. Oh, I tell you, Mr. Bartle, when the last tape has expended itself for the day, as our service code suggests, I leave this great edifice with a feeling of profound pride in the fact that I have so served my fellow man. You share that feeling too, don't you Mr. Bartle?"

Bartle shrugged. Pettigill paused and looked at the watch he carried on a long chain attached to a clasp on his tunic.

"A Benz chronometer, given to me by Section Secretary Andrews on the completion of my twenty-five years of service. It's radio-synchronized with the master timepiece in Greenland. It gives me a feeling of close communion with my superiors, if you understand what I mean."



Bartle did not. He said, "Am I keeping you from your work? If I am, I believe I can fill in on most of this back at the paper; we have files on the Center's operation."

The little man hurriedly put out a hand to restrain Bartle who was easing out of the chair.

"Not yet, Mr. Bartle," he said, suddenly much more sober. Then his incongruous pomposity appeared again.

"My gracious, no, you aren't keeping me from my work. I just must start the Mid-Lower Echelon tape. It won't take a moment. Tonight, they receive 'Concerto For Ass's Jawbone.' Sounds rather ridiculous, doesn't it?

Be that as it may, there is a certain stimulation in its rhythmic cacophony. Aboriginality--yes, I would say it arouses a primitive exaltation."

He flicked a switch above the recorder, turned a knob, and pressed the starter button on the machine. The tape began winding slowly from one spool to another.



"Is it 'casting'?" Bartle asked. "I don't hear a thing."

Pettigill laughed. "My stars, no; you can't hear it. See--" He pointed at a needle doing a staccato dance on the meter face of the machine. "That tells me everything is operating properly. Mass Psych advises us never to listen to 'casts. The selections were designed by them for specific social and intellectual levels. It could cause us to experience a rather severe emotional disturbance."

A peculiar look came over Bartle's face. "Is there ever a time when all the machines run at once? That is, when every Echelon home is tuned to the melopsych tapecasts?"

Pettigill registered surprise. "Why, certainly, Mr. Bartle. Don't you know Amendment 34206-B specifically states that all Echelon homes must receive music therapy at 2300 hours every night? Of course, different tapes to different homes."

"That's what I mean."

"Haven't you been abiding by the directive, Mr. Bartle?"

"I told you I owed my classification to my father's industry. I am definitely lax in my duties."

Pettigill laughed--almost wickedly, Bartle thought.

"What I'm getting at, is," Bartle continued, "what if the wrong 'casts were channeled into the various homes?"

"I remind you, sir, I am in charge of the Center and have been for thirty years. Not even the slightest mistake of that nature has ever occurred during that time!"

"That, I can believe, Pettigill," Bartle said, his voice edged with sarcasm. "But, hypothetically, if it were to happen, what would the reaction be?"

The little man fidgeted with his watch chain. Then he leaned close to Bartle and said in a barely audible whisper, "This isn't for publication in your article, is it?"

"You don't think the Government would allow that, do you? No, this is to satisfy my own curiosity."

"Well, since we're both Mid Echelon--brothers, so to speak--I suppose we can share a secret. It will be disastrous! I firmly believe it will be disastrous, Mr. Bartle!" He moved closer to the tall man. "I recall a secret administrative directive we received here twenty years ago concerning just that. In essence, it stated that, though music therapy has its great advantages, if the pattern of performance were broken or altered, a definite erratic emotional reaction would develop on the part of the citizens! That was twenty years ago, and I shudder to think what might be the response now; especially if the 'cast were completely foreign to the recipient." He gave a little shudder to emphasize the horror of the occurrence. "It would make psychotics of the entire citizenry! That's what would happen--a nation of psychotics!"

"The fellow who didn't hear the 'miscast' would be top dog, eh, Pettigill? He could call his shots."

---

Pettigill twirled the watch chain faster between a forefinger and thumb. "No, he'd gain nothing," he said, staring as though hypnotized by the whirling, gold chain. "It would take more than one sane person to control the derelict population. Perhaps--perhaps two," he mumbled. "Yes, I think perhaps two could."

"You and who else, Pettigill?"

Pettigill stepped back and drew himself erect. "What? You actually entertain the idea th--" He laughed dryly.

"Oh, you're pulling my leg, eh, Mr. Bartle."

"I suppose I am."

"Well, such a remark gives one a jolt, if you know what I mean. Even though we are speaking of a hypothetical occurrence, we must be cautious about such talk, Mr. Bartle. Although our government is a benevolent organization, it is ill-disposed toward such ideas." He cleared his throat. "Now, is there anything else I can tell you about the Center?"

Bartle arose from the chair, stuffing the scrap paper and unused pencil back in his pocket. "Thanks, no," he said, "I think this'll cover it. Oh yes, the article will appear in this Sunday's edition. Thanks, Pettigill, for giving me your time."

"Oh, I wish to thank you, Mr. Bartle. Being featured in a Bulletin article is the ultimate to a man such as I—a man whose only wishes are to serve his country and his brothers."

"I'm sure you're doing both with great efficiency," Bartle said as he apathetically shook Pettigill's hand and started toward the door.

"A moment, Mr. Bartle--" the little man called.

Bartle stopped and turned.

"I perceive, Mr. Bartle, you are a man of exceptional ability," Pettigill said and cleared his throat. "It seems a shame to waste such talent; it should be directed toward some definite goal. Do you understand what I mean? After all, we're all brothers, you know. It would be for my benefit as well as yours."

"Sure, sure, 'brother'," Bartle snorted and left.

He started for the paper office but decided to let the story go until morning. What the hell, he had a stock format for all such articles. The people were the same: selfless, heroic type, citizens working for the mutual good of all. Only the names were different. And yet, this Pettigill had disturbed him. Perhaps it was something he had said that Bartle could not remember.

He walked into his warm flat and extracted the pre-cooked meal from the electroven. He ate with little relish, abstractly thinking of the foolish little cog in the governmental machine he had talked with that afternoon. Or was Pettigill that foolish little cog? Bartle could not help but feel there was something deep inside him that did not show in that wizened and seemingly open little face. He thought about it the rest of the evening.

He looked at the clock on the night table--2300 hours. "Pettigill's Lullaby Hour," he thought. Bartle chuckled and switched off the bed light. He was asleep before the puffs of air had escaped from under the covers he pulled over himself.

When the phone rang at 0300, Bartle was strangely not surprised, although, consciously, he was expecting no call.

"Hello," he said sleepily.

"Bartle? This is Pettigill." The voice was Pettigill's but the nervous, timid, quality was gone. "I assume you did not hear the 2300 'cast?"

"You assume correctly, Pettigill. What d'you want?"

"Come on over to the Center; we'll split a fifth of former Section Secretary Andrews' Scotch."

"What the hell do you mean?"

"Were you serious about that 'therapy revolution' we were talking about this afternoon?"

"I'm always serious. So what?"

"Excellent, excellent," Pettigill laughed. "I've spent thirty years just waiting for such a man as you! No, I'm serious, my cynical friend--what position would you like in the new government?"

"Let's see--why don't you make my descendants real peachy happy and make me, say, Administrator of Civilian Relations. That sounds big and important."

"Fine, fine! Tell me, Bartle--how are your relations with psychotics?"

Bartle leaped to the floor. Instantly he recalled what Pettigill had said that had disturbed him. When they had been discussing the repercussions of a miscast, Pettigill had said, "it will be disastrous" and not "it would be disastrous." The devil had been planning just such a thing for God knows how long!

"How many of 'em, Pettigill?" Bartle asked.

"A lot, Bartle, a lot," the little man answered. "I would say 170 million! I might even say, a nation of psychotics!" He giggled again.

A smile sliced through Bartle's sallow cheeks. "My relations with them would be the best! Keep that Scotch handy, Pettigill. I'll be right over."

**End**

# NIGHTMARE

Trading Cards

featuring  
THE HOST  
and  
RODNEY

as seen on  
KSAS FOX-24  
Wichita,  
Kansas



**FOX**  
24  
**KSAS**

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**CA DAVEROUS**  
**CRUSTACEAN**

**1**



**HAUTEUR OF**  
**HORRORRORR**

**2**



**GREGARIOUS**  
**GRYPHON**

**3**



**SOPORIFIC**  
**SOLILOQUY**

**4**



**SUPERCILIOUS**  
**EATYR**

**5**



**GRANDILOQUEOUS**  
**GREMLIN**

**6**



**A RUGOSE**  
**RODENT**

**7**



Host

## Checklist

- ☐ #1 CADAVEROUS CRUSTACEAN
- ☐ #2 HAUTEUR OF HORRORROR
- ☐ #3 GREGARIOUS GRYPHON
- ☐ #4 SOPORIFIC SQUIDOUY
- ☐ #5 SUPERCILIOUS SATYR
- ☐ #6 GRANDILOQUEOUS GREMLIN
- ☐ #7 A RUGOSE RODENT
- ☐ #8 MOROSE MONGOOSE
- ☐ #9 PUZZLED POLLWOG
- ☐ #10 THE BOY SPROUTS
- ☐ #11 TRINKETS AND TREASURES
- ☐ #12 TWAS KNIFE AFORE CRISPNEFF
- ☐ #13 SILYBOBBLES
- ☐ #14 THE VARMINT VANISHES
- ☐ #15 THE PRODIGAL POLLWOG
- ☐ #16 THE TRANSFORMATION
- ☐ #17 BURGEONING SURGEONS
- ☐ #18 BOBBIN LEECHES
- ☐ #19 THE NAILMAN
- ☐ #20 THE INFERNAL RESIDUE MAN
- ☐ #21 A BACCHANALIA IS AFOOT!
- ☐ #22 MALEFIC MOLAR
- ☐ #23 OMNIVOROUS OGRE
- ☐ #24 ROISTEROUS REVELER
- ☐ #25 GHOULISH GARGOYLE
- ☐ Bonus Card #1 THE HOST
- ☐ Bonus Card #2 RODNEY





TRINKETS AND TREASURES

11



THE PRODIGAL  
POLLIWOG

15



THE BOY SPROUTS

10



THE VARMIN'T  
VANISHES

14



PUZZLED  
POLLIWOG

9



SILLYBOBBLES

13



MOROSE MONGOOSE

18



TWAS KNIFE  
AFORE CRISPNEFF

12

# NIGHTMARE

## TRINKETS AND TREASURES

THE HOST has collected many unusual items over the eons. Bottled in the jar is a favorite pet snake. A sculpted head sports a severed hand which was an unwilling souvenir from one of THE HOST'S sojourns.

FOX  
24  
K SAS

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# NIGHTMARE

## THE BOY SPROUTS

THE HOST is appalled to learn that RODNEY has been reading "The Younger Degenerate's Smut Quarterly." Feeling that RODNEY has missed the youthful endeavors youth, THE HOST inducts RODNEY to the principles of "The Boy Sprouts" included in the Golden rules of Boy Sprouting is the truly inspirational vow to "vow anything I have not vowed in previous vows."

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# NIGHTMARE

## THE PRODIGAL POLLIWOG

RODNEY returns from his absence, much to the delight of THE HOST, in the form of actor James Valdez. Valdez is the fourth actor to play RODNEY, beginning with his first appearance on May 11, 1991.

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# NIGHTMARE

## THE VARMIN'T VANISHES

THE HOST canvasses the classifieds in search of his missing amigo mio RODNEY. Look closely for a cameo appearance by NIGHTMARE director Mael Hernandez. From: WHERE'S RODNEY? aired April 27, 1991.

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# NIGHTMARE

## SILLYBOBBLES

RODNEY is learning to speak with the help of THE HOST. But when asked to say the word "cow," all he can manage is a loud "Moo-ooooo!!!" "Don't sound like one...say the word...cow!" THE HOST shouts. From: RODNEY LEARNS TO SPEAK aired June 15, 1991.

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# NIGHTMARE

## TWAS KNIFE AFORE CRISPNEFF

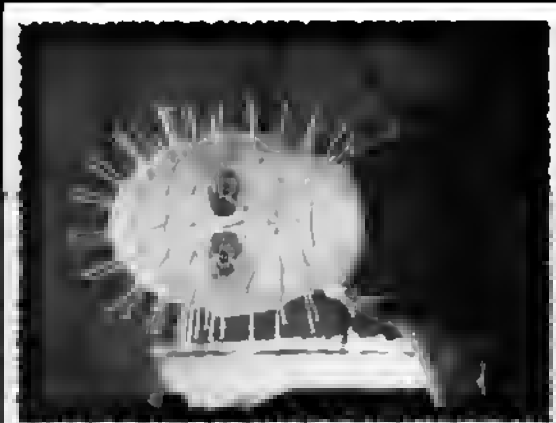
Twas knife afore Crispneff and all blew the house. Not a feature was blended, not even a louse! The fetishes were hung by their clammy hair in hopes insane Knuckleless would assume a bear!

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THE NAILMAN



18

BOBBIN  
LEECHES



BURGEONING SURGEONS

17



16

THE  
TRANSFORMATION



23

OMNIVOROUS  
OGRE



22

MALEFIC  
MOLAR



21

A BACCHANALIA  
IS AFOOT!



20

THE INFERNAL  
RESIDUE MAN

# NIGHTMARE

## THE NAILMAN

RODNEY tries to bring in some money by airing a religious segment during THE HOST'S show. THE HOST is very upset that RODNEY is using his air time, but changes his mind when the Nailman, played by contest winner Eric Fender, brings in bags of letters filled with a veritable fount of moo-lah! Cold hard cash, that is!

From: GIWWE THAT OLD TIME RELIGION  
aired December 1, 1990.

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# NIGHTMARE

## BOBBIN LEECHES

Bobbin Leeches from "Deathstyles of the Sick and Infamous" visits THE HOST'S abode. Bobbin, played by Tom Gateway, takes a tour of the castle and with the help of a voodoo doll is led to believe that THE HOST'S dwelling is filled with priceless antiques.

From: DEATHSTYLES OF THE SICK AND INFAMOUS Part II

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# NIGHTMARE

## BURGEONING SURGEONS

THE HOST and RODNEY set out to create their own horror monster. To THE HOST'S chagrin, their offspring turns out to be a hamburger and fries. With RODNEY'S assistance, he consoles himself by chomping down their progeny.

From: MAKING A MONSTER Parts I and II aired February 2 and 9, 1991.

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# NIGHTMARE

## THE TRANSFORMATION

Ever since the first version of NIGHTMARE appeared in 1958, Tom Leahy has been creating his own makeup effects. Tom designed the look of THE HOST, as well as the makeup for each RODNEY that has co-starred with him on NIGHTMARE. The first version appeared on KAKE-TV Channel 10 in 1958 and 1959, the second version on KSN Channel 3 from 1968 to 1971. The third and current version airs on KSA5 Channel 24, making its debut on September 22, 1990.

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# NIGHTMARE

## OMNIVOROUS OGRE

NIGHTMARE FACTOID #3  
When NIGHTMARE was first conceived, Tom Leahy always wanted THE HOST as his character, but he needed a name for his cohort. Greg Garner, who worked at KAKE-TV in the 50s and later became a news anchor, suggested the name RODNEY. Tom liked the suggestion and went on to create NIGHTMARE featuring THE HOST and RODNEY. Little did he know that Greg had suggested the name because the woman who would later become his wife was at the time dating a man named RODNEY.

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# NIGHTMARE

## MALEFIC MOLAR

THE HOST, being ever so helpful, extracts a pesky tooth from RODNEY'S mouth in a not-so-painless manner. THE HOST wishing to end his amigo's pain, uses hammer, chisel, extending screwdriver and pliers to free RODNEY from his fuisome tang.

From: RODNEY'S TOOTHACHE aired November 17, 1990.

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# NIGHTMARE

## BACCHANALIA IS AFOOT!

THE HOST puts a new slant on reading to improve his vocabulary for those tongue-twisting openings for NIGHTMARE. Here's the very first opening from September 22, 1990. "Good evening...the Violent chemical forces that ferment catalyticme catalic maistrans have now channeled the currents of time into this shadowed inter and once again...the anointed hour has arrived! A bacchanalia is afoot...a rounchy revel...a ghoulisn gambol, entitled.....

NIGHTMARE!!!

From: RODNEY LEARNS ETIQUETTE aired September 22, 1990.

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# NIGHTMARE

## THE INFERNAL RESIDUE MAN

Having failed to mail in his income tax form, THE HOST is visited by Infernal Residue Man Lamont P. Treadwell. (The P stands for persistently) Mr. Treadwell, played by Tim McGill, informs THE HOST that he has run afowl of the U.S. government. The mummified cat stuffed in an envelope and mailed shortly before the Blackhawk was isn't sufficient payment for taxes!

From: THE INFERNAL RESIDUE MAN aired April 13, 1991.

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KSA5

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25

**GHOULISH  
GARGOYLE**



24

**ROISTEROUS  
REVELER**



**SPECIAL CARD**  
Ooooh! Good Ghouls!  
Kilian Enterprises was nice enough  
to allow us to reprint this classic  
collector card set just for you, the  
readers of Basement Sublet of Horror  
magazine. Original sets of these cards  
can sometimes be obtained through online  
auction sites. Or you the choosers  
can gaze forever more at your own  
private special edition set included  
here, just for you the viewers of our  
favorite television program Nightmare.



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HORROR**



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# NIGHTMARE

## GHOULISH GARGOYLE

NIGHTMARE FACTOID #1

When NIGHTMARE first appeared in January, 1958, it joined many of the other horror host type programs airing all over the country. Each of these shows was taking advantage of what was known as the SHOCK film package released to television stations during the fall of 1957. In time for Halloween, this film package featured the classic horror films from the Universal film studio, such as FRANKENSTEIN, THE WOLFMAN, THE MUMMY and DRACULA.

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24  
KSNV

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# NIGHTMARE

## The Basement Sublet of Horror Special Edition of Kilian Enterprises NIGHTMARE Trading Cards

Presented as a supplement  
to Basement Sublet of Horror  
magazine issue #3  
(Not for resale or publication)

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24  
KSNV

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# NIGHTMARE

## ROISTEROUS REVELER

NIGHTMARE FACTOID #2

By the fall of 1958, the horror host format had become so prevalent on national television stations that TV GUIDE published two articles on the phenomenon. The first appeared in the March 29, 1958 issue with pictures of hosts from Chicago, Miami and Philadelphia. A second article appeared in the December 1958 issue and featured Wichita's own horror host Tom Leahy as THE HOST and Lee Parsons as the first RODNEY.

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KSNV

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# NIGHTMARE

## HAUTEUR OF HORROR

NIGHTMARE FACTOID #3

Nightmare with The Host and Footey was the inspiration and basis for the Lawrence based horror host television program "The Basement Sublet of Horror", the lead character Gurney Dedmond also is loosely inspired by The Host, Tom Leahy Jr.

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A regular routine for Richard growing up was watching the Saturday night Creature Feature with Crematia Mortem on channel 41 KSHB out of Kansas City. He launched his blog, [monsternoviekid.wordpress.com](http://monsternoviekid.wordpress.com), in 2012, and joined the Dread Media podcast in 2015 as a weekly contributor. He's also made appearances on the B Movie Cast and Monster Kid Radio podcasts.



### Dan Rempel

(Artist & cover artwork)

Dan Rempel lives in Lawrence, KS where he is finishing up a degree in illustration at the University of Kansas.



### Roger Hill

(Contributing writer)

Roger Hill, in the Lime-ite this week, was born and raised in Wichita, KS, where he lives and works for a video production company that produces commercials for television and local radio. From the beginnings of organized fandom in the 1960s to the present, he has been involved in efforts to organize, document, and celebrate the legacy of a wide array of entertainment media - including, of course, comics.



### Scott Phillips

(Contributing writer)

Scott Phillips is the author of three of the most highly acclaimed crime novels of recent years. His debut novel, The Ice Harvest, was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year, it is a major motion picture from Focus Features. Born in Wichita, Kansas, where much of his first two books are set, Scott lived for many years in Paris, and then in Southern California, where he worked on screenplays.







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# GREEN HELL FROM THE VOID

Produced and Directed by TOM LEAHY JR.

Movie Poster for Green Hell from the Void by Dan Rempel